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REACTION

to the

REPORT OF THE

COMMISSION ON EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

Submitted by

Board of Trustees, Edmonton R C S D No 7

Edmonton Separate School Local No 54, ATA

October 1972

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Edmonton Catholic School District

EDUCATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE CENTRE
9807 - 106 STREET, EDMONTON, ALBERTA, T5K 1C2 — TELEPHONE (403) 429-7631

October 16, 1972

Mr Gerry Amerongen, M L A
10236 Connaught Drive
Edmonton 40, Alberta

Dear Mr Amerongen:

I have been requested by the Board of Trustees of the Edmonton Catholic School District and the Executive of the Edmonton Separate School Local of The Alberta Teachers' Association to forward to you a copy of the joint submission which is being made to the Cabinet Committee on Education regarding the Educational Planning Commission Report. We believe that as a Member of the Legislature you will be anxious to obtain as much background as you possibly can regarding this report. If there is any further information you may desire regarding this or any other educational matter, please feel free to contact us.

Yours truly,

H. A. MacNeil

H A MacNeil
Superintendent

HAM/do
Enc

October 12, 1972

The Cabinet Committee on Education
Suite 400
11010 - 142 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5N 2R1

Dear Sirs:

This reaction to the Report of the Commission on Educational Planning entitled "A Future of Choices", is a joint submission by the Board of Trustees of the Edmonton Roman Catholic School District No 7 and the Edmonton Separate School Local, No 54 of The Alberta Teachers' Association whose membership includes the teaching staff of the separate school system. Both the Board and the Local feel that they would be shirking their responsibilities if they failed to point out the concerns of this the third largest school system in the province.

Our brief has been kept short and we did not attempt to react to all the recommendations and suggestions contained in the report. This would be a physical impossibility at this time and perhaps of little value because of the manner in which many of the recommendations are made. It is our contention that if the spirit of the report which is the choice of futures by the people of Alberta is to be achieved, there must be close consultation with the public and those involved in education before specific recommendations proposed in the report are implemented.

On behalf of the Catholic parents and teachers in the City of Edmonton, we would like to thank the Cabinet Committee for the opportunity which has been extended to us of making a submission.

Yours truly,

EDMONTON ROMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT No 7

Jean D. Forest
Chairman
Board of Trustees

EDMONTON SEPARATE SCHOOL LOCAL No 54, ATA

D. A. MacKenzie
President

October 12, 1972

The Cabinet Committee on Education
Suite 140
11010 - 142 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5N 2R1

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EDMONTON ROMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT No 7

Chairman
Board of Trustees

EDMONTON SEPARATE SCHOOL LOCAL No 54, ATA

President

REACTIONS TO THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

Introduction

The Board of Trustees of the Edmonton Roman Catholic School District No 7 and the members of the Edmonton Separate School Local No 54 of The Alberta Teachers' Association which comprises the teaching staff of the separate school system view seriously their responsibilities in regard to the report of the Commission on Educational Planning and are submitting this joint reaction for consideration by the Government of Alberta.

It is our intention to point out what we consider to be one of the basic weaknesses in the Commission report namely, the lack of any consideration in the philosophy of education for a Christian dimension. In addition, we would like to endorse some of what we consider to be important recommendations. This approach, by no means, indicates that there are no other serious deficiencies in the report or that we agree or disagree with all other proposals and recommendations.

We would like to point out the fact that the Commission by attempting to foretell the future establishes two all inclusive alternate future categories - the person-centred and the second phase industrial society and thus, forestalls any adverse criticisms and judgments of the recommendations. Any criticisms have to be placed in one of these two established categories. If one objects to some of the implications suggested in the person-centred society, then one automatically becomes an advocate of the characteristics of the second phase industrial society namely, conformity, puritanism, individualism and so forth. Thus, by such logic the report of the Commission is unassailable.

Spiritual Dimension to Education

Regardless of the difficult position in which we find ourselves in reacting to the report, we feel that we must speak out against the very weak philosophic approach upon which the Commission bases much of its report.

The educational philosophy setting out the purposes and goals of education as outlined by the Commission report leaves no room for a Christian dimension which we feel is an essential part of education. As Catholics, we take the position that education must involve the growth and development of the whole individual including the spiritual. The Declaration on Christian Education issued by the Second Vatican Council states this well:

> "For a true education aims at the formation of the human person with respect to his ultimate goal, and simultaneously with respect to the good of those societies of which, as a man, he is a member, and in whose responsibilities, as an adult, he will share."[1]

The acceptance of this view, together with thebelief that the school is only one of the agencies involved in education requires that the values held by parents must be an integral part of the school program. We believe that this can be best achieved when the schools strive to develop the gift of Christian faith in the students and helps them to realize how Christian faith and Christian values are lived in society.

It is our contention that the Christian ideal which inspires the total education of the Catholic child involves the integration of the entire planning process. The objectives of Catholic education can only be achieved if the entire school and the total school day are set in their proper perspective. We reject the fallacy that Catholic education is the teaching of a Religious Education course for a set period each day. Important as this is, it is only a small part of the integrated program for Catholic schools.

We are quite surprised that the Commission fails to endorse pluralism in the basic structure of education in Alberta. The recognition of the spiritual dimension in education is a basic right which is the foundation stone of our democratic way of life.

Separate Schools

The provision for a minority of either Catholics or Protestants to establish separate schools has been set down by the British North America Act and reiterated in The Alberta Act (1905). Thus, from both the philosophical and legal points of view, the rights of Catholics must be respected and all changes regarding education in the province must guarantee these rights.

1. We endorse the Commission's recommendation that separate school jurisdictions should be maintained.

2. We fully concur with the suggestion that wherever possible separate school districts in the rural areas be provided with the same advantages enjoyed by the majority of the larger school divisions.

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1. "Declaration on Christian Education", Art. I Documents, op. cit., P. 639.

3. We cannot accept the suggestion that there be a joint public-separate school board. Our philosophy and our objectives must dictate our method of operation and will, therefore, differentiate us from the public school systems.

Some Important Recommendations

There are many recommendations in the Report of the Commission on Educational Planning in which there is concurrence on the part of the trustees and teachers of the Edmonton Catholic School System. We would like to draw your attention to the following important recommendations:

1. The Role of Parents in Education

   We recognize the value of an increased role for parents in the matter of participation at the local school level. We agree with the recommendation of the Commission of extending community participation in education by the provision of parent advisory committees at the local level providing such councils are advisory in nature.

2. Early Education

   We endorse the principle of financial support for early education and that emphasis be placed on creative selective experiences. Participation at this level should be at the option of the parents.

3. Community Schools

   We support the view that the community school can serve society by providing for the needs which the local community requires.

4. Alberta Academy, Early Education and the ACCESS Network

   We endorse the concept of the Academy, Early Education and the support network called ACCESS. We believe that there should be close cooperation of those agencies involved in continuing education and that the vehicle and media for supporting these programs must be developed within the near future. We feel that the concept is a good one but that we are not prepared to endorse unknown financial commitments.

5. Relating Education to Life

We are in agreement that education must be much more concerned with life experiences. We endorse the concept of Work Experience and Leisure Education.

6. Handicapped and Disadvantaged Learners

We agree with the recommendations of the Commission report that there must be greater emphasis in providing opportunities for the physically, mentally and economically disadvantaged children of the province. We feel that wherever possible education for the disadvantaged should follow an integrated approach. We endorse the Regional Learning Centres together with programmed development at all levels.

7. School Year Organization

We are in agreement that there must be "a more sensible approach" to the school year organization. We endorse the view that the Department of Education has the responsibility to provide the mechanism whereby local jurisdictions can make plans in which there is some commonality to allow for movements throughout the province.

8. Role of the Local Board of Trustees

We are in agreement with the position taken by the Commission that the elected school boards should have an important role in the governing structure in education in Alberta. As indicated in the Commission report, one of the most important governing principles in establishing the educational structure should be "the activities to be performed at the provincial level must be limited to those which cannot be performed at the local or institutional level."